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Extracts of a LETTER from Dr. LORIMER, of West-Florida, to HUGH WILLIAMSON, M. D.

Read before the Society, 21st April, 1769.

WHEN I read the plan for enlarging your Society, one part of it particularly called to my mind an introduction to the conclusion of the modern part of the Universal History, wherein the geography of this globe is considered in a new light, with a view to discoveries. In that article it is observed, that the lines which measure the greatest length of the old and of the new continents are nearly equal, and that they incline to the equator in the same angle, but in opposite directions. It is farther remarked, that each of them divide their respective continents into two tracts of land almost of the same superficial contents, and that these continents seem fixed by nature as a counterpoize to one another. Your ociety take notice of the similarity between the east side of the old continent, and the east side of the new, in vegetable productions, &c. and vice-versa. Now let me contribute one proof of this proposition amongst many others. The odoriferous Skimmi of Japan is a native of West-Florida. Our agent is a great naturalist, and particularly intent on procuring specimens of this plant. I hope in a little time to be able to give you and him a pretty satisfactory account of it. We have a variety of shrubs, with aromatic and odoriferous bark. I am really of opinion that the common plants have a more exquisite flavour in this climate than in other countries. There is a kind of sarsaparilla, which answers the intention, but I question whether it would sell well at first. We have snake-root and many other medicinal plants, and I do not doubt but some articles may be discovered which are yet unknown in the *Materia Medica*. There is a beautiful kind of bean, which some of our sailors having eat of, were surprized with a vomiting and purging, just as another crew were by eating poke for fallad. There is likewise a plant of the pea kind, said to be used by the Indians as an universal remedy in venereal cases. I hope soon to be better acquainted with these things: Though I am sorry to say that I am no great botanist, nor have we any man
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of eminence in that way. Here is certainly a great field to employ naturalists. Minerals, especially iron, we have in abundance. I have a very good natural magnet, found within six miles of this town. There is an excellent chalybeate water just by, its elastic spirit has driven the cork out of the bottle which contained it. The country is full of navigable rivers, and runs of the finest fresh water. About Mobile and at the swampy mouths of some rivers, it must be a little unhealthy, but it is far from being so bad as has been imagined. In April 1765, when I was notified as surgeon to the forces here at the war office, I unluckily prognosticated the fate of our troops which were then to be sent out. It is now evident that it was misconduct entirely that occasioned the loss of so many soldiers and subjects. I am just making out a state of the medical constitution of this climate; as an introduction to which I have given a short general account of the situation of the country and the temperature of the air; for which last purpose I have taken the height of the thermometer generally three times every day for one whole year, and I have noted all the extraordinary variations for almost three other years. Nothing else could give an idea of a climate, where the thermometer will rise or fall sometimes 20 degrees in a few hours, and at other seasons not 2 in many days, the extremes being at least from 17 to 98 degrees of Fahrenheit's scale. Your Society observe, that on the East Coast of North-America and of China, the North-West Winds are cold and piercing, the South-West warm and dry, the North-East cold and wet, the South-East wet but warm; and that the case is different on the West Coast of Europe and at California. Now on this Coast, which is neither the East nor West side of a continent; in winter the Southerly Winds are warm and moist, the Northerly cold and dry: In summer we have the daily sea breeze from the South, and in the night or morning a refreshing gentle land wind from the North. The sky in this country is remarkably serene, especially when the winds are Northerly. A thought just strikes me, that, according to the foregoing similarities, our coast should resemble that of Persia from the river Indus to the gulph of Ormus, but as there is no Mississippi on that coast, we may compare the mouths of that river with those of the Ganges, and the country about Bengal, to that of New-Orleans.

Orleans. The Spanish Main, as we call it, shall be Arabia, and Spirito Sancto, in East-Florida, may represent Madrais. However, to return to what we know of our own situation. The Gulph of Mexico may be considered as one great whirlpool. The general course of the waters in the Great Oceans, as well as the current of the Air within and near the Torrid Zone, being from East to West; the force of the Atlantic comes upon the West-India islands, and the lengths of these islands are in that direction. When the waters get into the Great Gulph, they are obstructed every where, and as it were turned round by the land, the greatest velocity of this great body of water will be towards the Equator, and it must get out where it meets with the least resistance, that is on the side towards the Pole, and there it forms the strong current or passage, called the Gulph of Florida. The natural course therefore of the waters on our coast, should be from West to East; but here there are frequent currents which are very irregular, depending most probably on the winds, but seldom on that which blows on the spot. By the general law of the tides, there should be flood for one six hours, and ebb for the six following nearly, but here an ebb-tide will continue or eighteen or twenty hours, and the flood only four or six, & viceversa. A southerly wind always raises and keeps up the waters in our bays, and the northerly winds almost empty them, yet it must be allowed that these ebbs and floods are not equable during this continuance, for upon accurate observation there is a tendency to two ebbs and as many floods every twenty four hours, though they are overpowered by the winds or currents. The entrance of our bays and rivers are defended as it were by a shallow or sand bank, which forms a bar farther out towards the sea, than is usual in Europe; the depth on the bars is not at all proportional to that within the rivers: All the rise on the bars is about a foot, while in the bays it is almost three. The mouths of our rivers are frequently divided into different channels by a kind of swamp covered with reeds, and all this is most probably occasioned by a kind of conflict between these currents, and the rising of our rivers at certain seasons of the year. There are no dangerous shoals on this coast, unless you fall too far to the Eastward about Cape-Blaze, or St. George's Islands. The latitude of the Cape being the most southerly
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land in West-Florida is about $29^{\circ}.40'$. and from thence to the entrance of Sancta Rosa bay, which is in $30^{\circ}.30'$ the land gradually declines to the North. From Sancta Roza to the entrance of Mobile Bay in lat. $30^{\circ}.17'$. it falls again to the Southward; and from Mobile Bay to the entrance of the lakes it is nearly East and West. There is no such thing as recommending any map of this country. Bellin and such as have copied from him, give some resemblance of the coast, but they are all erroneous, and that in very material articles. If Mr. Gaulds's surveys are not soon published, he will possibly send a copy of them for your Society, but he is just now so engaged that he cannot set about such a work. Thus far I think it necessary at present to inform you from his papers; that the bay of Spirito Sancto is sufficient for first rate ships, but that is in East-Florida. The harbour of Pensacola will only admit such as draw 21 feet water, though that is sufficient for 50 or 60 gun ships, and there is a road lately discovered behind the Chandeliers, which is much more commodious than that at Ship Island in its neighbourhood; it will admit vessels of any size, and is sheltered from all winds except the North and North-West, in which cases they can easily put to sea, and make for Pensacola or Spirito Sancto, if necessary. The bay of St. Joseph is not unlike that published by Jeffereys, it has 18 feet water good, fine anchorage, and would be a most advantageous situation for a fishery, salt pans, &c. The bay of St. Andrew just adjacent is as much larger as it is unlike to any thing yet published, it extends from South-East to North-West, and is a most commodious harbour for vessels of 13 feet draught. The bay of Sancta Rosa is still more extensive; it lies from South-West to North-East, but can easily answer for the Pensacola pettiaguers, which by the long channel within the island, and the river which falls into the head of the bay, and extends North East almost to the Lower Creek Nation, may trade with the Indians. The lands upon this river at some distance from the bay are good, but all along this coast there is little else than a sandy beach and pine barren. But for a description of the rivers Mississippi, Pearls, Pascogoula, the Tombecby, and Albama, which fall into the bay of Mobile, the bay and river of Perdido, just contiguous to Pensacola,

the Scamby, and so forth, I refer you entirely to Mr. ———, who is a much better judge than I am of the advantages which may be made of their produce, &c.

I SHALL fend you a description of an Universal Magnetic Needle It gives the variation and dip at the same time, the last of which I presume with more accuracy than any yet extant. It answers in all parts of the world, without the addition or alteration of any poise, such as our best compasses now have. A collection of American magnetical observations is much wanted; with the course of the line of no variation in-land, and the dip, which I imagine will be found greater than in the same latitudes on the European side. The farther to the North and West, that the observations could be made the better. This was a subject which I had despaired of ever seeing reduced to any kind of regularity, but I am now well satisfied that it may. I have great expectations from the plan of your Society, and shall make it my business to prepare something or other, by the time I can expect to have the favour of a few lines from you. I most sincerely wish you success, and am, Sir,

Your most obedient

Humble Servant,

J. LORIMER.

Penfacula, Jan. 7, 1769.